

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (original) A system for optimizing network resources for conference calls, comprising:

endpoints that request the conference calls;
multi-point control units for supporting conference calls between three or more endpoints;
a resource scheduler for receiving the conference call requests; and
a gatekeeper communicatively coupled to the resource scheduler for managing the network resources.

2. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein the gatekeeper includes a connectivity policy module for maintaining network policies.

3. (original) The system of claim 2, wherein the network policies include network bandwidth management policies.

4. (original) The system of claim 2, wherein the gatekeeper manages the network resources based on the conference call requests and the network policies.

5. (currently amended) The system of claim 1 ~~[[4]]~~, wherein the gatekeeper includes a bandwidth module communicatively coupled to the connectivity policy module for determining network bandwidth availability for the conference call requests.

6. (currently amended) The system of claim 1 ~~[[4]]~~, further comprising a network management system communicatively coupled to the gatekeeper to determine if dynamic cascading of the multi-point control units is required for resource optimization.

7. (original) The system of claim 6, wherein the gatekeeper further includes a cascade optimization module for determining an optimum cascade configuration for the multi-point control units.

8. (original) The system of claim 7, wherein if the network management system determines that dynamic cascading of the multi-point control units is required for resource optimization, then the gatekeeper determines the optimum cascade configuration for the multi-point control units.

9. (original) A method for optimizing network resources for a conference call requested by endpoints, comprising the steps of:

- receiving the conference call request by a resource scheduler;
- accessing a connectivity policy module;
- determining if sufficient network resources are available to connect the conference call; and
- supporting the conference call between three or more endpoints with multi-point control units.

10. (original) The method of claim 9, wherein the connectivity policy module maintains network policies.

11. (currently amended) The method of claim 9 [[10]], wherein the connectivity policy module accesses a bandwidth module for determining available network resources.

12. (currently amended) The method of claim 9 [[11]], wherein if sufficient network resources are available to connect the conference call, the resource scheduler schedules the conference call.

13. (currently amended) The method of claim 9 [[12]], ~~wherein a determination is made~~ further comprising determining whether a dynamic cascading of the multi-point control units is required for network resource optimization ~~are optimized by a dynamic cascading of the multi-point control units.~~

14. (original) The method of claim 13, wherein if dynamic cascading of the multi-point control units is required for resource optimization, then an optimum cascade configuration for the multi-point control units is determined.

15. (canceled)

16. (original) A system for optimizing network resources for conference calls, comprising:

a plurality of local area networks;

a plurality of endpoints coupled to the local area networks for requesting conference calls;

a plurality of multi-point control units coupled to the local area networks for supporting conference calls between three or more endpoints;

a resource scheduler coupled to the local area networks for scheduling the conference calls;

a gatekeeper coupled to the resource scheduler for determining an optimum cascade configuration for the multi-point control units; and

a network management system coupled to the gatekeeper for determining whether dynamic cascading of the multi-point control units is required for resource optimization.

17. (original) The system of claim 16, wherein each of the plurality of endpoints is a videoconference-enabled device.